ACCESS

Job Corps Accommodation Support Newsletter

Supporting Students with Learning Disabilities

A Learning Disability (LD) is a neurobiological (concerned with the nervous system) condition that affects the way individuals of average to above average intelligence receive, process, store, retrieve, and express information. An individual with a learning disability typically has that learning disability for life. Learning disabilities range in level of severity, from mild to severe and an individual may have more than one type of learning disability. Some individuals learn to compensate so well that the disability is no longer problematic; others learn to use a variety of strategies and supports in order to navigate life successfully.
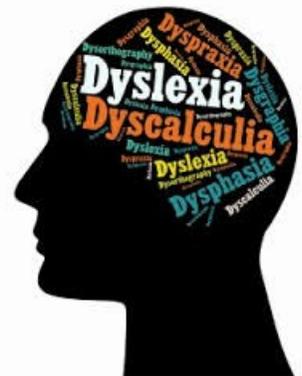
Understanding the specific challenges and learning strategies to deal with LD at every stage can alleviate a lot of frustration. Many of the challenges can be overcome through the use of proper accommodations. Learning disabilities do not have to stop students from achieving their goals and fulfilling their dreams.

Impact on Learning and Working

Prior to the economic changes and the technological revolution of the last few decades, an individual with a LD could successfully compete in a "hands-on" environment, where reading, writing, and computing was not always critical to the functions of the job. Now employers not only want their employees to possess the basic skills of reading, writing, and math but also skills in critical thinking, problem solving, and reasoning. Successful employees also must exhibit positive personal qualities and be effective communicators.

This poses numerous challenges for individuals with LD who not only have to overcome cognitive processing difficulties, but who may also have difficulties with social competence (e.g., accepting criticism and change, managing pressure, making inferences, being sensitive to others).

These social skills deficits may be reinforced by previous negative experiences of individuals with LD arising from academic and social failures, rejection, and the attitudes of others. If an individual's social and emotional functions are not addressed, he/she still may face discrimination even with accommodations for his/her disabilities. Consequently, the impact a LD has on education/training programs is significant.

Students with LD (cont'd)

Shifting From Deficits to Strengths

Shifting from a deficit model that focuses on multiple risk factors and moving toward a focus on strengths is a difficult, yet necessary, step to foster resilience, enhance competence, and facilitate successful academic and career technical experiences for Job Corps students with LD. Generally, academic achievement, communication, and problem social/emotional behaviors often go hand-in-hand for these individuals. When developing an Accommodation Plan (AP) for students with a LD, the Reasonable Accommodation Committee (RAC) will want to consider learning, communication, environmental, and behavioral accommodations that will support the student in all areas of the program (e.g., academic, career technical, residential, transition, etc.).

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and LD

Universal Design for Learning (UDL www.cast.org) is a framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all people based on scientific insights into how humans learn. UDL provides a way to prepare and respond to the functional limitations associated with LD (and all disabilities). By designing environments and tools with disabilities in mind from the start, staff and students all benefit from proactive rather than reactive solutions. *(More on UDL on the Tips for Working with LD Students webpage)*

Assistive Technology (AT) can play a major role in LD-type solutions. Low tech AT such as electronic check lists, graphic organizers, and reminder devices provide immediate structure and feedback to support students with LD-related functional limitations. Other forms of AT include specific apps that help students with LD-related conditions such as reading, writing, and math difficulties, organizational issues, memory issues, and social challenges, etc. *(See Spotlight on Assistive Technology section)*
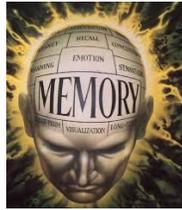
Functional Limitations and Accommodations

The following table outlines some common functional limitations and possible accommodations to support students with LD.

Functional Limitation	Functional Limitation
Issues with Communication	Reading Difficulties
Accommodations	**Accommodations**
➢ Allow alternate format(s) for communicating (e.g., written response in lieu of verbal response) ➢ Provide advance notice of topics to be discussed to help facilitate communication ➢ Provide extended time on assignments, responses, tasks, tests	➢ Provide visual representations of words/phrases/concepts ➢ Allow the use of electronic readers, apps, computer programs, audio books/materials ➢ Provide extended time for assignments, tasks, tests that involve reading printed materials

Students with LD (cont'd)

Functional Limitation

Weak Memory Skills

Accommodations

➢ Provide instruction, directions, expectations in a variety of formats (oral, written, etc.)

➢ Provide checklists, copies of notes, planners, graphic organizers

➢ Allow the use assistive technology such as cell phone apps and voice recorders to keep track of assignments, tasks, due dates, etc.

➢ Repeat instructions, expectations, directions

➢ Provide mentor/buddy for daily guidance and check-ins

➢ Allow extended time for assignments, tasks, tests

➢ Frequently check for understanding of new materials and concepts

Functional Limitation

Lack of Social Skills

Accommodations

➢ Teach replacement behaviors and reinforce with praise, privileges, tangibles

➢ Provide specific, positive feedback when student demonstrates appropriate social skill behaviors

➢ Provide peer mentors or role models

➢ Provide video examples of appropriate social skills and behaviors (e.g., YouTube)

➢ Teach acceptable social behaviors in different contexts (academics, career technical, recreation, residential)

➢ Allow the student a pass to access supportive adult (counselor, mentor, Center Mental Health Consultant, another instructor…) when behavior is escalating

Functional Limitation

Math Calculation Issues

Accommodations

➢ Break math assignments down into single steps

➢ Allow the use of graph paper for math problems involving more than one-step operations

➢ Allow the use assistive technology such as a calculator

➢ Provide feedback on each step of a math problem (not just the final answer)

➢ Provide mentor/buddy for daily guidance and check-ins

➢ Allow extended time for assignments, tasks, tests

Functional Limitation

Organizational Issues

Accommodations

➢ Provide checklists, copies of notes, planners, graphic organizers

➢ Allow the use assistive technology such as cell phone apps and voice recorders to keep track of assignments, tasks, due dates, etc.

➢ Repeat instructions, expectations, directions

➢ Provide mentor/buddy for daily guidance and check-ins

➢ Divide larger assignments into smaller parts and check for completion of each part

Spotlight on Assistive Technology: LD

Number Line

The Number Line app provides students with an interactive math tool to visualize number sequences and calculations. Students can choose to set number values such as whole numbers, fractions, decimals, negative numbers, or just use a blank number line.

Google Keep – Notes and Lists

The Google Keep app supports memory challenges by helping students capture, edit, share, and collaborate on their notes on any device, anywhere. Students can set and reminders about a note and can record a voice mail and have it translated.

Notability

The Notability app is a notetaking app that supports working memory, written expression, and organization. Students can combine handwriting, photos and typing in a single note.

Disability Resources

Sample Accommodations for LD Handout

Sample Accommodations for Learning Disabilities Handout is one in a series of handouts designed to provide Job Corps staff with simple, low/no cost accommodations for various functional limitations related to a disability.

Supporting Students with Disabilities Website

Supporting Students with Learning Disabilities was specifically designed to support Job Corps center staff with ideas, strategies, and resources to meet the various needs of students with learning disabilities. The website has links to define learning disabilities, describe some of the functional limitations and accommodations for LD, provide strategies, supports and tips for teaching students with LD, discuss related disabilities, and connect users to LD-related resources.

Regional Disability Coordinators

- Boston: Kristen Philbrook (philbrook.kristen@jobcorps.org)
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National Disability Employment Awareness Month

October was National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). This year's theme, "America's Workforce: Empowering All," reminds us that hiring employees with diverse abilities strengthens businesses, increases competition, and drives innovation. Some of the NDEAM 2018 activities held by Job Corps centers are summarized below.

- ➢ **Atterbury:** The center promoted NDEAM by focusing on raising awareness about hidden/invisible disabilities such as depression and anxiety. Classroom presentations and discussions were led by the Disability Coordinator and an instructor. A center Disability Program partner, AccessABILITY, provided information on invisible disabilities and related support services to CTR classrooms, and hosted a "meet and greet" table at lunch.

- ➢ **Burdick**: The center provided a variety of NDEAM activities that included a field trip to a disability-related event in the community, distribution of a flyer containing information on several disability-related cell phone apps, and an assembly for the entire student body that included using a group of students to demonstrate and discuss removing barriers to employment.

- ➢ **Cass:** The center held a disability-related poster contest and showed a disability-themed movie.

- ➢ **Flint Hills:** The center placed NDEAM posters at several locations on campus and played NDEAM videos on the TV in the lobby of the administration building. A teacher presented a training on reasonable accommodations.

- ➢ **Loring:** The center held a NDEAM poster contest highlighting different disabilities. The winning posters featured detailed information about asthma, HIV/AIDS, anxiety, and celebrities with disabilities.

- ➢ **New Orleans:** The DC visited each classroom to discuss the purpose of NDEAM. Students were given disability awareness bracelets to encourage participation in the planned activities which included a disability awareness activity, a disability awareness table at lunch, and various invited speakers/partners.

- ➢ **Pittsburgh:** Each day of NDEAM week, the center hosted a variety of related activities that included volunteer students and staff signing a pledge to use People First Language, participation in a disability awareness-focused game with prizes, a "Skills to Pay the Bills" lesson in CTR classes, a poster contest, recognition of World Mental Health Day, recognition and participation in National Depression Screening Day, and a Walk for Your Cause event.

- ➢ **Treasure Island:** The center hosted a group of community disability-program partners to speak with students and provide information about job development and building independent living skills. Participating partners included Marriott's Bridges from School to Work program, Department of Rehabilitation, and Pride Industries.

E-mail your comments or suggestions to:
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Job Corps 2018 NDEAM Events

**Job Corps centers participating in NDEAM activities from top to bottom, left to right:
Burdick, Loring, Atterbury, New Orleans, Treasure Island, Pittsburgh, New Orleans, and Pittsburgh.**

Upcoming Webinars

Please check the Event Registration page (Note: Link only works outside of Citrix) on the Job Corps Community Website for dates/times of upcoming disability-related webinars